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SOME ODES AND DIDACTIC VERSE OF GOETHE IN ENGLISH *

After Matthew Arnold, who will record his private opinions and feelings unwarily on so monopolized a topic as Translation? Yet an ordinary lover of literature will be pardoned for having his fling at the long-eared grey-felled surefooted word-for-worders? Browning, somewhat sensitive and not without reason, took keen delight in quoting a classical criticism of the criminal Æschylean obscurity! But as a schoolboy, having patiently employed dear old Robert's transyllabification as a crib, methinks it were not amiss to make the punishment fit the crime, if King Minos should doom Æschylus for so grievous a sin of obscurity, by way of all-sufficient atonement, to use his own "Agamemnon" once only as a crib to Robert Browning's!

And now Goethe — quite generally admitted to be fourth among the immortals — must be Englished, and this German God of poetry is not always instantly transpiguous!

Thank heaven, so far no Browning has offered himself for the adventure. But our own Bayard Taylor — traveller and pleasant singer — for all his American optimism deeming it possible English should follow foot by foot the metaphysical postures and verbal contortions of New High German, for all his eager ingenuity and fine craftsman's mastery of diction and rhythm — how has our brave Bayard fared in the fray?

Remembering my trials as devoted initiator into the Faustian mysteries, I dare to put a leading question: — would the student (of little German usually, and perhaps less English) make exalted sense at critical spots out of the scholarly version of our faithful verse-for-verser and foot-for-footer, did not the aforesaid student have at his elbow that gay scapegrace of a paraphrast, Dr. John Anster, who skips irresponsibly from dizzy height to height, and that spinsterly correct Miss Swanwick reared to breathe the common air on the homelier sealevel of wellbred discourse?

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How difficult the task of rendering Goethe's easy yet tense, precise yet suggestive, idiomatic yet elegant verse into English that shall have the poetic cadence and verbal association, together with the accurate sense and equivalent sentiment! Who, more cheerfully ready to affirm this than one who has himself attempted the undertaking? Let, however, one specimen here adduced make clear beyond a doubt and cavil, how hard be the ways of the translator!

The theme is that of George Meredith's "Woodland Peace," but the whole comprised in eight lines of such spontaneity and simplicity as to baffle analysis. Let Longfellow's translation be offered the reader first in deference to the engaging importer of poetic cosmopolitanism.

O'er all the hill tops
Is quiet now,
In all the tree-tops
Hearest thou
Hardly a breath;
The birds are asleep in the trees;
Wait; soon like these
Thou, too, shalt rest.

Spürest du — Kaum cinen Hauch is rendered with word-for-word fidelity — except that "hearest" applies only to the ear, whereas *spürest* includes every other sense. Furthermore there is the very different emotional value of the second person singular of verb and pronoun in the two languages; affectionately familiar in German, stiltedly formal and obsolete in English. "In the trees" for *im Walde*, repeats the word of the third line, adding no value of its own. "Like these" makes explicit a comparison purposely left more delicately implicit by Goethe; and rhyming as it does with "trees," "these" might be mistakenly referred to them.

But the worst defect appears in the use of "hilltops" as equivalent for *Gipfel*; which meaning "summit," could have a symbolic as well as a literal sense, whereas "hilltop," alas, is strictly topographic!

Now let us see what Aytoun and Martin have done. Two heads being so obviously better than one, our expectation is rais-

ed for all the fame of the singer of "Miles Standish" and the "Vacant Chair".

Peace breathes along the shade
Of every hill
The tree-tops of the glade
Are hushed and still;
All woodland murmurs cease,
The birds to roost within the brake are gone.
Be patient, weary heart, anon
Thou, too, shalt be at peace.

The same objection as before can be urged against "hill." "All woodland murmurs cease" merely repeats line four without substantial gain by the prolixity, save a rhyme. "The birds to roost" is for us Americans quite out of tune. Let us hope this line is Aytoun's and not Martin's, lest Oehlenschläger's and Heine's often so felicitous translator suffer hurt in reputation!

Next let us see what Sir Edgar Alfred Bowring has done for us. He who Englished so much of Schiller and Goethe, surely will do better than others with this elusive poem!

Hushed on the hill
Is the breeze;
Scarce by the zephyr
The trees
Softly are pressed;
The woodbird's asleep on the bough.
Wait, then, and thou
Soon will find rest.

"On the bough," not being an equivalent for *Wald*, forest, the *Vöglein* have become the woodbird. This may pass. "Zephyr" idly repeats "breeze;" and "pressed," for all it be negated, leaves behind it a most vexing suggestion that comes nigh to annulling the whole intent of the poem — that of making us realize "peace." But more than all, how has the large relevancy of *Ueber allen Gipfeln Ist Ruh* been specifically contracted in the would-be equivalent "Hushed on the hill Is the breeze!"

The very title *Ein Gleiches* baffled our translators. Aytoun and Martin called the piece "Evening," as did also Sir Edgar Alfred Bowring. Longfellow headed it "The Same." And what pray does that mean? What is the Same? Here Rossetti

helped their audacious follower, and his caption therefore should be: "Evenso."

EVENSO

Hovereth o'er every height
 Peace visible;
 And every treetop—light
 Breathings do lull
 Of dreamless sleep.
 Birds hush them in the brake.
 'Bide thee, thou too ere long shalt take
 Thy rest—still, deep.

Confessedly there is considerable liberty taken with the original in the last version. But nothing is wantonly added, not even "dreamless sleep," which helps to repeat the sentiment of "peace." And the ambiguous feeling (rather than sense) of the first line is at all events preserved in:—"Hovereth o'er every height, Peace visible," mayhap as cloud, as blue sky, as euthanasia and theophany, as the symbolic dove by Jordan's bank. Peace "in bodily shape" somehow "hovereth" and is above and nigh and felt as Peace; and the height—is the mere mountain or the morally sublime! For *Spürest du Kaum einen Hauch*—"Breathings do lull Of dreamless sleep"—is a free amplification to avoid at a critical place the difficult second person singular, and secure a surer and more definite psychological allusion for the "waver of tree tops."

Has the present writer then preserved the sentiment of the original; though he has sacrificed the simple direct familiarity of style? Does the cadence: "Thy rest—still, deep" atone for the obsolete: "Bide thee, thou too"? Of these delicate questions surely each reader must be judge on his own behalf, and will temper discreet judgment with mercy—unless he can himself assist us to a solution better than the Alexandrian cut of the Gordian knot.

Without further apologies, therefore, let the remainder of our space be occupied by a few hazarded translations which will, taken together and in their order, provide a survey of the world and man and God from Goethe's own chosen point of view.

As no lines he ever penned have impressed the world more than the last two of "Faust," nor caused more controversy, we

shall assume that they meant more than meets the ear. For why in the name of sense or justice should the "woman soul" be credited with so much, and the equally notable *Ewig Männliche*, as Nietzsche mischievously puts it, be so cruelly bereft of honor due? Since, however *Das Ewig Weibliche* has actually served to test the poetic soul of the man; he betraying his own deepest self in his manner of envisaging that portentous miracle — the "eternal feminine" — we shall do well to quote, in full Goethe's "Wanderer" with "The Wayfarer" for caption. Indeed the poem is his Madonna. From among the ruins of a glorious past, babe at breast, she appears to rest and refresh him, full of grace, with her simple girlish naturalness; and to offer him unasked the bread of life: faith, that is to say, in the external fitness of nature's inhuman ways of dealing with her noblest product — man.

DER WANDERER

The Wayfarer

Wayfarer —

Hail, and God bless thee,
Young mother, and the little one
The son at thy breast!
Let me drop at the rock-wall here
In the elm-tree's shadow
My burden down,
And rest me beside thee.

Young Mother —

What craft can drive thee
Thro' the heat of the day thus
Up the dusty path hither?
Bearest wares from the town
Through the country-side?
Thou smilest, stranger,
At this my question?

Wayfarer —

No wares from the town have I brought.
Cool now grows the evening.
Show me to the well-spring
Whereat thou drinkest,
Gracious new-wed wife!

Young Mother —

This way, up the rock-path.
Go before me! It leadeth
Through the shrubberies thick
Unto the well-spring
Whereof I drink.

Wayfarer —

Tokens of ordering human hands
Betwixt the bushes appear.
These stones be not of thy building,
Prodigal-handed Nature!

Young Mother —

Up further, and on!

Wayfarer —

Lo, covered with moss, an architrave!
I know thee, fashioning mind
Again, — thy seal in the hewn rock deep-set.

Young Mother —

Press onward, stranger!

Wayfarer —

Inscriptions whereon I trample,
Alas, illegible!
Away are ye flown
Deep graven words, —
Ye that to thousand generations
Should your master's worship show.

Young Mother —

Starest thou, wondering
At this stone, stranger?
Farther up about my cot
Full many stones lie.

Wayfarer —

Yonder?

Young Mother —

Close at thy left
Up thro' the thick bushes, —
Here!

Wayfarer —

Ye muses and graces!

Young Mother —

This is my cottage.

Wayfarer —

Ruins of a temple!

Young Mother —

Down the slope this way
Up-welleth the spring
Whereof I drink.

Wayfarer —

Aglow still hoverest thou
Over thy grave-mound,
Genius; albeit on thee
Hath crashed and crumbled
Thy masterwork,
Undying spirit!

Young Mother —

Stay, the while I fetch the cup
That thou mayest drink.

Wayfarer —

Ivy hath clothed about
Thy godlike structure tall.
How ye yearn upward
Out of the wreckage,
Ye pillars twain
And thou too, lonesome sister!
How ye together,
Mournful moss on your hallowed heads,
In grief majestic look down
Beholding the prostrate pillars
At your feet broken,
Your kith and kin!
Of the tangled bramble-bushes shadowed,
Rubbish and earth half hide them;
And the gaunt grass stalks over them!
Dost thou thus scorn, O Nature,
Thy noblest creature's noblest work?
Shatterest thou so
Thy holy of holies, to plant there
The dock and the darnel?

Young Mother —

How he sleeps, my baby boy!
Wilt rest thee, stranger,
In our cottage?
Or wouldest rather
Here in the open tarry?
Cool it is. Take thou the boy
The while I fetch thee water.
Sleep, my darling, sleep!

Wayfarer —

Sweet is thy rest!
On heavenly seas of health
Afloat, tranquil he breathes!
Thou, born among the remnants
Of a holy long-gone past,
May its spirit breathe on thee!
For whom it halloweth, he,
As the gods in self-knowledge, shall thrill
With the gladness of day after day.
Unfold, thou swelling bud!
Loveliest gem adorning
White-shimmery spring,
Outshine thy fellows;
Then may the full fruit rise
Out of thy bosom
And ripen to sunward!

Young Mother —

God bless him! Still he sleepeth?
Naught have I more but homely bread
To offer thee, with the cool spring-water.

Wayfarer —

My heartfelt thank.
How all about doth put forth bloom and leaf!
What verdure!

Young Mother —

Soon from the field
My husband home
Will come. O, stay, friend, stay,
And share with us the evening meal.

Wayfarer —

And here — ye dwell?

Young Mother —

Yonder among the toppled walls
My father lived to build the cottage
Of tiles and of the ruin's stones.
Here — do we dwell.
To a husband he gave me, and breathed
His last soon in our arms . . .
Hast slept thy fill, sweetheart?
How merry, see, and fond of play!
Wee-rogue!

Wayfarer —

Nature, forever budding, each
Hast fashioned to the joy of life,
Purveying as mother true
To every child a home for heritage.
High buildeth the swallow
Under the eaves, unwitting
What chiselled grace she bedaub; —
About the golden bough her brood's
Winter abode, the canker worm
Spinneth; and thou, 'mid ruins august
Of the long-gone past, O man,
For thy bare needs
Buildest thy patch-work cot; —
And hast over graves — thy joy!
Farewell, thou happy wife.

Young Mother —

Thou wilt not tarry?

Wayfarer —

God keep you twain
And bless your boy.

Young Mother —

God speed thee.

Wayfarer —

Whither o'er yonder hill
Will the path take me?

Young Mother —

To Cuma.

Wayfarer —

And how far thither?

Young Mother —

Three miles or more.

Wayfarer —

Farewell.
 Oh, lead my steps
 Nature, — the stranger's
 Wayfaring foot
 Which o'er the graves
 Of a hallowed long-gone age
 Wendeth care free, —
 To a place of safety
 From north winds sheltered,
 By a poplar copse
 From the noon-sun screened; —
 And, when homeward I turn
 At eventide
 To my hut in the last ray golden —
 May such a wife there bid me welcome,
 Our infant son in her arms!

We have now seen (and we trust with Goethe's "eye serene") "the very pulse of the machine" and thereby known it to be spirit and not as Wordsworth maladroitly for rhyme's sake puts it — mechanism. Therefore like Wordsworth's more fortunate highland girl, she haunts us ever — and becomes unwittingly symbol and worship.

From *Die Nektar Tropfen*, the first portion of *Der Deutsche Parnass* and his great *Zueignung* (for which let the English reader eke out his Bowring to heart's content — or otherwise) we can gather how noble a vocation and grace of God, art seems to our Olympian.

Art — that noblest gift of all
 Words as poet's arms are made, —
 When the god will be obeyed,
 Follow fast his darts erelong
 That blest one will be safe from every ill,
 Who takes this gift with soul of purity:
 The veil of minstrelsy from truth's own hand.

But right here let us note how it is the Poetry not of irresponsible fiction, but of insight, intelligent memory and relevant fancy which he would give us; and that he would have this poetry rationally employed to supplement the natural goods of life.

Come then, my friends, and whensoever ye find
Upon your way increase life's heavy load ;
If by fresh-wakened blessings flowers are twined,
Around your path, and golden fruits bestowed,
We'll seek the coming day with joyous mind !

For though he unflinchingly fronts the evil, no pessimist is Goethe. Old, solitary — but for his daughter-in-law Ottilie and her offspring — he “loved,” still at fourscore “the sweet habit of living and doing things” and declared that life was “like the Sybilline books — the fewer the leaves left, the more precious.”

His optimism, however, is not due to discerning goods that escape the pessimist's view, but to his own deliberate and successful contribution of mind and heart unto that whole of which he is a creative part. The world and fate are but half human. It is man should humanize them for himself. And this humanizing of the world and fate by man is Art.

Now artist though he is, owing no fealty to moral law as pious tradition or social convention, Goethe comes nevertheless to know it and honor it as inherent in the Artist's work, and vital to the Artist's noblest manhood.

NATUR UND KUNST
Art and Nature

Nature and Art still shun each other's sight,
Yet mate as fellows, ere one wotteth well.
My stubborn mood hath long since left me quite ;
So, which most draweth me I scarce may tell.

There needs must be a strait and true endeavor :
But, the full dole once paid — of life we owe,
Bound mind and will as thralls of Art forever,
Fiercely at heart as erst may Nature glow !

Like token marketh every high emprise.
All spirits undisciplined strove in vain to stand
Where heights of pure perfection reach the skies.
Who great things would, shall hold his soul in hand.

Only self-mastered may man master be,
And law fulfilled, alone can speak us free !

Artist, with this resolute devotion, Goethe must go on to discover the law of life from a more general survey than his own individual life and lot permit. Hence, for his times most comprehensive and audacious scientific studies, which made of him the

first Poet of Evolution, knowing in himself whereof he spake and sang. *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* and *Die Metamorphose der Thiere*, set forth his notions of species, and their relation, and the wider law underlying their distinctness and affinity. The first of these didactic pieces was translated by Bowring and so we will extract from the second the broad principle Goethe discerned.

Nevertheless within, the might of the worthier creatures
Findeth itself enclosed in a round of living formation.
Borders no God may enlarge, and which Nature revereth:
For, thus limited, only was possible ever the perfect.

May this noble conception of might and restraint and of self will
And law, and of freedom and bounds, and of order in motion,
Lack and advantage,—rejoice thee; for hearken, the holy
Muse doth teach it thee thus with gentle insistence.
Higher conception no ethical thinker attaineth;
None the man of affairs, at his craft no fashioning artist.
Rulers thence, worthy of rule, the pleasure draw of their sceptre!
Highest Creation of Nature, rejoice that thou feelest thee able
Thinking, her loftiest thought to o’ertake, whereto in creating
She herself upsoared; there plant thee, and thence let thy glances
Backward sweep, make proof, and compare, and take from
the Muse’s
Mouth (that thou see, nor be drunken,) this full truth, certain
and gracious!

In such wise then Goethe the artist and the scientist became Goethe the moralist — the attainment of one’s own completest life and lot requiring even more than the external law required (less, however, the sense of humiliated acceptance from without) for the sake of others — since he discovered it on his own behalf, as innate in the actual constitution and vital law and his very being.

So little was Goethe inclined to waste creative energy in criticism that the religious protest of his soul, though vital and vigorous, got scanty expression. He began a dramatic poem “Prometheus” — which for some reason or other remained a fragment. Perhaps the torso was in this case more satisfying than the completed statue promised to be. He was too cultivated and self-sceptical to mistake the bow of Iris and Noah’s post-diluvian discovery for a substantial modern Bifrost over

which across the sundering gap he might lead his people, even such as they were, into a new Walhalla. He was, by a rational habit of soul and a wide acquaintance with the philosophic and poetic past, wholly unable to mount like Shelley, and whirl us along with him, in a cloud of phrase and rhythm through nebulous luminosity into the "intense inane" and then mistake the mystic individual rapture, however infectious, for an effective social salvation! So, Prometheus, the rebel, was the utmost the theme could yield him.

What does man owe to God—God as a being and consciousness apart from man's own? Nothing. That external non-human God — if indeed he be at all — is strangely ineffective and noncommittal. If that God then be, in very truth, he is ever like man, fashioned by omnipotent time and by eternal fate — subject to the same universal laws. So let man thank not that unhelpful hypothetical Being—but himself—his virtue, his natural strength, his imagination, reason and will! Finely is this human protest uttered (and we should be tempted to say finally) in Goethe's "Prometheus." Nor does Bowring's translation call seriously for much amendment. If, however, "God" be taken as the collective expression for "the gods"—the natural powers without and within man—they do not have any claim on man's love. Let him fear them — use them and never cease to consider their devious ways. The chorus put in the mouths of the Parcae at the end of the fourth act of *Iphigenia*, for which Miss Swanwick's translation is clearly the best extant, sets forth magnificently their utter inhumanity. If ethics be theirs, then is the principle of their ethics for man totally undiscoverable and unworthy of respect:—

Whom they have exalted
Let him fear them most.

God as a transcendental omnipotent providential Father, and God as a gracious divine fellowship of kindly disposed patrons, are bravely denied then to exist; and what *is* in their stead to the eye critically schooled, cannot have any just right to man's veneration and grateful self-subjection.

Ah, ye Gods, ye mighty Gods
In the wide heaven over us,

Would ye grant us here on earth
 Stalwart mind and cheerful heart,
 Gladly would we leave to you
 O, ye good, your heaven above!

And this little ironical piece, he entitles "*Menschengefühl*"—a human feeling (perhaps all too human, in Nietzsche's phrase). For though Goethe would not be called an atheist even with regard to these above mentioned "notions of God," he is quite content to remain agnostic. What have Such Gods to do with us? And if so, then what have we to do with them?

Now in religious affirmation Goethe was more joyously at home by temperament, and therefore more convincingly eloquent. To such as will assume for the nonce his unconcern with extra-human and extra-mundane deities, these chaunts breathe the very life of piety and the fervor of idealism. They are poetry, not metaphysical definition; elation of spirit, not dogma. But to render them more easily comprehended, and therefore perhaps more heartily acceptable in their noble self-restraint, and rational enthusiasm, it may be well to emphasize the arbitrary sequence in which we here produce them.

Man's consciousness and character appearing to him and for him, and disappearing in due time with equal mysteriousness; the mystery also for him in the particular course allowed them by the world in which they find themselves; these are sung

O life of Man's soul
 How like unto water!
 O weird of Man's life
 How like unto wind.

Then we are asked to meditate on the limitations of man's power of body and mind. Only through successive generations does man even appear to escape them. But the generations are "a chain link in link" and cannot flee from their own law of being and order. They repeat rather the limitations of the "petty round" than pass forth in free spiral or parabola.

But what are in fact these Gods, men have ever yearned to know and dwell with in heaven? They are ideals man must realize on earth. Their only source is man's groping endeavor. They are projections outward of inner aspirations. If they ever

are to be actual reality, we shall have to bring them into being by act; and then we may by metathesis turn our final end into a cause, and call ourselves the children of God!¹ Strictly spoken — the Gods shall yet be children of man. Albeit, to those unknown unreckonable potencies of the Universe let us pay the workshop due — for that indeed is their only human use: — to aid man to adore and yearn. They are helps to the exercise of man's highest and noblest powers, or they are nothing to him.

Yet there be Gods — in the sense of functions, faculties and attributes within — whom it behooves us to cultivate, at all events to grant full freedom of play unto greater achievements. And of these mental and sentimental powers Goethe cherishes most Phantasy and Hope — for they set man in human preëminence above the animal.

To them "the moment's cramped mindless existence." To man—prospect and retrospect; free of "mere want and need," to make-believe and enjoy—to find mastery and courage and refreshment in the spirit. And beware lest Wisdom wax overbearing, and cramp Phantasy with petty rules of prudence; or lest in our devotion to Phantasy we disparage the vital Hope through which Phantasy leads on to her own vindication in "high enterprise," and obtains consolation, however often it may fail of deserved fruition in a world that ignores us, furthering or thwarting blindly our intent.

After so much more or less superfluous comment let the noble poems themselves address the reader in the best version we were able to make for him, hoping that he too will accept the challenge and do better if he can!

GESANG DER GEISTER UEBER DEN WASSERN

Chant of the Spirits Over the Waters

The Soul of Man
Is like unto Water:
From heaven it falleth,
To heaven ariseth,

¹ The "Word" is *die That*; for the deed alone includes idea, energy and will, and through it only is mind truly made manifest.

And thence to earthward
In endless round
Again returneth!

When from sheer crag quick-gusheth
The flashing stream,
It breaketh in shimmer
And glister, and flitteth
To the smooth sheen rocks
Below; whence softly
Updrawn, as a mist-veil
Forthfluttereth, its mysteries
Lisping and whispering
Adown the still deep!

If rough boulders upfling them
Its onrush to stem,
Lo, it frotheth and roareth
From ledge to ledge weltering
To the bottomless pit;
Thro' level green valleys
It dallyeth wistfully —
And the stars do number
In wide pools unwrinkled
Their twinkling array.

The wind is the lusty
Lover of waters,
Who the foamcrested billows
Upstirreth and mingleth.

O, Life of Man's soul,
How like unto water!
O, Weird of man's life
How like unto wind!

DIE GRENZEN DER MENSCHHEIT.

Human Limitations.

When far scattereth the Ancient
Of days and most holy
Allfather, freehanded
From billowing cloudrack,
The seeds over earth
Of beneficent lightning —
I kiss me his vesture's
Uttermost border,
The little child's reverent
Fear in my heart.

For let not the mightiest
Mete him as fellow
With beings divine.
Aloft doth man hurl him
With proud front to smite
The heavens — and lo, helpless
His foot findeth nowhere
Safe stead, while the welkin
And wind with him play.

Or, with stout^rthrew astrain
If he rear him up, stalwart,
On the fast-founded earth
Everlasting, — behold,
Tho' haughty of stature,
Shall to skyward his reach be
With the gnarled oak's likened,
Or the clambering vine's?

What sundereth mankind
From the Gods thus forever?
Innumerable the waves fare
On and on following —
A flow inexhaustible
Before them; while us —
One surge lifteth and swalloweth,
That we sink into nought.

A petty round, close
Engirdeth our life;
And the frequent generations
Outstretch link in link
The chain never ending
Of human existence.

DAS GÖTTLICHE

The Divine

High-hearted be Man
Kindly and good.
Seeing thereby only
Preferrèd is he
Before all beings
To mortals known.

Hail the loftier Unknown
Beings whom in awe
We forefeel! Let man be

After their likeness;
In them his ensample
Teach trust and belief!

For, without feeling
Is Nature; on wicked
And good forthshineth
The sun; ay, the mean
Alike and the worthiest
Behold the still beauty
Of moon and of stars.

Whirlwind and flood
Thunder and hail-storm
Roar on their way,
And, hurtling past them,
Whelm in destruction
All in their turn.

Even so, blind gropeth
Luck 'mid the many;
Now catching the curls
Of the guileless youngling,
And now the bald pate
Of the hoary in guilt.

Girded of laws
Everduring, adamantine,
Vast,— all, all
Must draw to its close
Their round of existence.

Man only can bring
To pass the impossible;—
'Tis he who discerneth,
Who deemeth and doometh;
And the vanishing moment
By his grace may endure.

To man only is granted
Boon for the worthy,
Bane for the wicked;
He healeth, he saveth;
The astray and wide-strown
He atoneth in use.

And immortals we worship
As tho' human they were;
Wrought in the vast,
What in the narrower room

The worthiest doeth,
Or fain would do.

Be the high-hearted man, then
Both kindly and good!
Fashioning unwearied,
The Useful, the Right;
In truth so foreshadowing
You beings we divine.

MEINE GÖTTIN

My Goddess

To which of the deathless
Shall the highest praise be?
I contend not with any,
Yet proffer my worship
To the quick-varying
Ever-young and light-hearted
Wondrous daughter
Of Zeus, his darling
Child — Phantasy!

For unto her freely
Made he allotment
Of all moods and whimsies,
Else sacredly warded
For him alone;
And greatly he taketh
Delight in the anticks
Of his wayward wanton: —

Whether her listeth
With crown of red rose-buds
And white lily-sceptre
To trip it thro' valleys
Abloom, and queen it
O'er summery song-birds
And butterflies, sipping
The sweet dew, bee-like
From the heart of the flowers;

Or whether her listeth,
With loose locks streaming
And look melancholy,
In the winds to fling her
Over beetling crags;
Or with hues myriad-glinting
As the morn and the even,—

With ever new aspect
 As the smiles of the morn,
 To reveal her to mortals.

Wherefore laud and thank
 Let us proffer the Ancient
 Of Days, high-exalted,
 The Father, who so lovely
 Never-fading a consort
 Hath accorded us, perishing
 Children of men!

For unto us only
 Hath he lovingly plighted her
 With the troth-ring of heaven, —
 And straitly charged her
 In good days and evil
 As true-hearted helpmeet
 Never to forsake us.

The other poor kindreds —
 Offspring of the Earth
 Living Mother of lives, —
 Roam, raven and feed,
 In the gross joys sordid,
 And the dull brutish anguish
 Of the moment's cramped
 Mindless existence; —
 Bowed low by the yoke
 Of want and of need!

Howbeit unto us, (O
 Joy!) — he hath granted
 His subtlest, much-fondled
 And daintiest daughter.
 Come, graciously meet her
 As best belovèd;
 Intreat her to wield
 The sway of our household.

And beware lest step-dame
 Wisdom, unwittingly
 Ruffle her sensitive
 Tender child's spirit.

Albeit, fellowship
 Lief, with her elder
 Soberer sister
 Long have I cherished;

O may she not leave me
Ere the last ray of life;
She, to high emprise urger,
Soul-consoler — kind Hope!

And now after these odes which any reader of poetry must enjoy, whatever his convictions, we would present for his consideration three pieces of a wholly different order. In sixteen stanzas compact, precise, suggestive — that puzzle, provoke, yet allure to repeated trials of strength with their Delphic obscurity — Goethe expresses his maturest views of man, the world and God.

They were none of them translated by Sir Edgar Alferd Bowring, C.B., doubtless “because” in his opinion “the few other pieces included by Goethe under the title of Religion and the World are polemical and devoid of interest to the English reader!” If Bowring has judged rightly, the American reader we fancy is not wholly like his cousin! It was doubtless, however, after sore wrestlings with these pieces that Sir Edgar at break of day discovered they were only of controversial and local interest! For difficult as they are in the original, they become even more so in any version that endeavors to preserve poetic dignity. Too easily would the translator give us arid abstracts without the hypnotic spell-power and the oracular manifoldness of meaning that doth “tease us out of thought” and constitutes orphic poetry. We should have rhymed metaphysics devoid of interest for any except some mind in complete metaphysical agreement with the author. Our task was undertaken with fear and trembling and executed with perspiring diligence and frenetic rapture. Had there not been for us a personal motive, it is to be feared the reader would not now have his opportunity to exult over our failure. But there was one eager student of Goethe that knows no German, and for whom the work had to be done as well or ill as the Muses and Minerva would permit.

So without effort at self-vindication, we shall proceed to give these sixteen stanzas, eleven prefixed each in turn by prose comment which, if he resent as an impertinence, the offended reader will kindly cross out with editorial bluepencil, and read and re-read the translations all the oftener — with the originals if he can, and is so minded — that he may be tempted to supersede these

efforts, doubtless more laudable for the good intent than for the eventual excellence.

Yet let the reader once more impress on himself, be he Christian Dogmatist, or Atheistic Dogmatist, that we have neither of these twain sorts of cocksure folk in our poet. He is agnostic, but reverently disposed towards any transcendental God; profoundly trustful and devout in attitude towards an immanent God; and indulgent toward all idols — “God-notions” presumed ultimate, externally alive, effective and dominant; for they are but man’s intellectual moral, emotional and physical “bests” or ideals, projected illusively for more ardent and loyal service and adoration. Let us peruse then the Proemion as Englished by Bowring:

PROEMION

In His blest name, who was His own creation,
 Who from all time makes *making* his vocation;
 The name of Him who makes our faith so bright,
 Love, confidence, activity and might;
 In that One’s name, who, named tho’ oft He be,
Unknown is ever in Reality:
 As far as ear can reach, or eyesight dim,
 Thou findest but the *Known*, resembling Him;
 How high soe’er thy fiery spirit hovers,
 Its simile and type it straight discovers;
 Onward thou’rt drawn with feelings light and gay,
 Where’er thou goest, smiling is the way;
 No more thou numb’rest, reckonest no time,
 Each step is infinite, each step sublime.

What God would *outwardly* alone control
 And on his finger whirl the mighty whole?
 He loves the *inner* world to move, to view
 Nature in Him, Himself in Nature too,
 So that what in Him works, and is, and lives,
 The measure of His strength, His spirit gives.

Within us all a universe doth dwell;
 And hence each people’s usage laudable,
 That ev’ry one the Best that meets his eyes
 As God, yea e’en *his* God doth recognize;
 To him both earth and heaven surrenders he,
 Fears Him, and loves Him too — if that may be!

Eins und Alles, “All and the One” and *Vermächtniss*, “My Legacy” are in the same stanza-form, and are knit together by

common lines, the first stanza of the latter taking up the conclusion reached in the last sestet of the former.

Urworte, "Oracular Words" (to which the poet wrote some helpful prose comments), restates in more generic, and by the use of myth and obsolete theory, more imaginative form, the same great doctrine of life, spiritual but not transcendental; deliberately self-limited to this bank of the Styx. Being yet unghosted, if he should take a trip with Charon at all, Goethe insists on returning to the side of body and form, of sense and reason.

"All and the One," "My Legacy" and "Oracular Words" form in the mind's eye a little book of parchment in black letter with golden capitals and cherry-red rubrics — for the pocket of the devout Naturalist. And, any such book of devotion (of hard sayings, hard because to the sayer, final) must be prized by every man whatever his own philosophic label or ecclesiastical niche.

ALL AND THE ONE

On the one hand the individual as a selfconscious repellant entity; and on the other hand the many others which for the former in their relative vagueness of particularization (as contrasted with his own vivid, emphatic, unique, certainty to himself) vaguely integrate in a manifold general; and these Twain in eternal antithesis and conflict: Who of ardent sensitive souls does not at times weary of them, and long for total fusion, unity, the absolute of conscious bliss realized in the lapse from separate consciousness? No function is well performed while we are aware of the process. Acute consciousness is for fresh experiments. For the well-tried and mastered — unconscious preformance or rather performance conscious of body ease and soul ease, perfect function and complete life. So this mystic self-surrender seems a finding of the true Self.

SELF-SURRENDER.

Ay, self to find in the boundless Vast
Gladly the One were lost at last,
All chafe and coil dissolved away;
No heat of lust, wild will grim set,
Irksome demand, stern duty's threat;
Self — yielded up — what ecstasy?

But if it be no illusion that in this experience some Soul of the Whole takes possession of the part, the selfsurrender is not for its own sake surely, but for a taking possession in our turn of the thought which that Soul of the Whole thinks in its very self. Interpenetration, if real, is mutual. And indeed, so have the sages taught. Each brings back to the plane some token of his divine intercourse in the mount, which in turn shall lead his disciples to climb for themselves the steep ascent.

ATONEMENT

Soul of the world, come thrill us through !
 To wrest from the world-mind the True
 Were chiefest use, then, of our strength.
 Wind spirits beckon and proffer aid;
 To Him who maketh all, and made,—
 The foremost masters lead at length.

And what do we see from the divine height? A perpetual process of creation! The formless, formed; and form reformed. A perpetual onward, that whatever it aims at — if it aim at all with manlike intelligence and volition — at all events refuses to be arrested at any stage, however noble, of the eternal process.

CREATION

To shape again the fashioned shape —
 Lest stiff, it rear and ramp agape,—
 Is wrought by th' onward Thrust of life.
 What was not, now would come to birth
 In clear bright sun, or motley earth,—
 But never to rest from change and strife.

And whence this "onward Thrust of life?" Apparently, not from without. An inherent necessity! Yet the type is recurrent through the ever changing forms. And that type would break asunder, and the All become nothing, if anywhere at any time any part should persist in self-identity. For the type is a moving type — a mode itself of motion, which can only continue true to itself in change.

EVOLUTION

Live shall they, and press with fashioning strain,
 The self-framed shape transformed amain;
 But somewhiles seem they stayed and still.

The Abiding goeth forth in all :
For the All to utter Nought must fall
If held to being with stark self-will.

MY LEGACY

Vermächtniss, My Legacy; my will and testament; whereby I empower you to become child of my spirit; bearing therein my witness to life, and transmitting to you my holiest wisdom; the net result of that hazardous ethical experiment in living I conducted, with as complete a freedom as sane mind and sound heart allow a civilized and cultured man. Wherefore accept my legacy, and use it, for what may be to you its vital worth.

If all is thus in flux — why fear? That which thou lovest about thee if it be as real as thou, must float with thee down the selfsame stream. Set thy heart on things that verily be, and know that the “Eternal” is in the transient; vanished spring returns and the set star rises again. Thou hast no true cause for alarm.

EXISTENCE

What is — to Nought can nowise fall.
The Abiding goeth forth in all.
Thy bliss in *being* then have and hold ;
For Being abideth ever ; and laws
Thy living hoard shall keep, because
The All decked him therewith of old.

And truth, be sure is never new — though new to thee. What thou findest to be true, call it by whatsoever name thou please, is what from the beginning made human life possible; and has for primal source — that which ordered suns, and planetary orbits — and holds them what they are.

REASON

Time out of mind, the truth was found,—
And the high fellowship of souls close-bound.
Hold fast the eldest Truth, and thank
O child of earth, for wisdom — One
Who bade earth wing her 'round the sun,
Hosting her brethren rank on rank.

As thou hast no right to conceit of the intellect, neither hast thou right to irresponsible wilfulness in conduct. In every be-

ing works its organic law. In thee too it may be discerned by thee; and so from the oracle within, shalt thou get thee guidance for the hour of bewilderment and gloom.

CONSCIENCE

Now straightway to within thee turn
That midmost spot wilt thou discern
No man of worth can dare gainsay.
Hast lack there of no rule or 'hest:
For love — self gotten — of the best
Is sun unto thy duty's day.

Das Selbständige Gewissen — the self-dependent consciousness of one's true nature and interest — will guide thy life so far as the organic and individual being constitute it; but there is a partner to thy life: — the outer world thou must come to know, and estimate through sense and critical intelligence. Observe closely, scrutinize, classify — and use.

So guided by conscience and science the world is thy patrimony — and no ghoul or demon shall say thee nay.

UNDERSTANDING

In th' body's wits put childlike faith;
They cheat not ever with lie or wraith
Whom the quick mind shall ward from sleep.
With keen glad eye go mark and learn;
Fare safe, howso thy path may turn,
Through a world of wealth far-strown and deep.

Yet beware. The world is thine. But let it not wrest thee from thy true interest. Thy life of retrospect must not be marred. Store thy mind with assimilable memories only. Surfeits and excesses — at the time may be insolently joyful — are loathsome after, and need to be forgotten. Thou wilt have to lose some of thy memories to endure the present; and the obstinate ghosts of retrospect will flee to rearward, only to meet thee in prospect and bar the way with nightmare hideousness. Wherefore, so live the actual life that thy mental life shall be a continuous memorable whole; — that, like a symphony, its end shall be an *encore* of pious gratitude.

PRUDENCE.

In plenty and weal, taste — and forbear,
Be Heed still bidden, and well aware
When life of life hath cheer and glee;
So shall the bygone day abide,
And time forefeel the unborn tide,
And the brief Now — forever be!

Yet such living is an art acquired only by practice. Some accidental discords will need resolving. And through these experiments, thou wilt discover the only standard of truth and value: — good and blessed consequences. So, thou wilt learn how dispassionately to observe mankind, that lives no such life as thou fain wouldest: — their conventional choices — their perpetual *da capos* of folly and futility — and shalt be well content with the intimate company of those few, who like thee would make their lives, so much as in them lieth, things of beautiful use: —

WISDOM.

And hast thou got thee skill herein,
Thoroughly to feel, and surely ween:
“What fruiteth well alone is true” —
Behold thou long the common sway —
What dooms it deemeth on for aye —
And fellow thee unto the few.

Yet if thou wouldest help them forward, do so not by attempted violence. Like philosophers and poets, take the privilege of directing the currents of their psychic experience into good channels. Surely no more satisfying function, no more delightful expense of vital energy is possible!

VOCATION.

And, as of yore alone and still
Some work love-born of their own will
The men of lore and song-craft 'gat,—
Thou winnest gift most fair: to fashion
High souls with thine own thought and passion!
What call or task shall better that?

For lo, thou hast exercised the prophetic office — anticipated their thought and feeling — because thou hast thereto incited them with thine; unconsciously they have accepted thy patterns,

seen by thee in "thy mount" — and as thou aspiredst and didst create — so shall they come to *be* indeed and therefore also in truth.

URWORTE, ORPHISCH

Oracular Words in Orphic Manner

And now having made the above "will and testament" to the children of his spirit, he will say farewell to us so far as this paper is concerned in his "Oracular words in Orphic Manner:" Individuality, Environment, Passion, Necessity, and Aspiration; for which the reader needs now no comment. Of course Astrology, the myth of Primal Eros, and the myth of the three Sisters and their Weird (taken in its Hellenic form) help to give impassioned expression to the philosophy of our non-transcendental Idealist, our glad-hearted, keen-witted Naturalist — the poet of "Faust" Parts First and Second, of "Egmont" and of "Iphigenia in Tauris", in which the life-passion, heroism, and sincerity of the modern soul, have their loftiest poetic expression hitherto vouchsafed the creative spirit of man.

ΔΑΙΜΩΝ: DÄMON

The Genius, Individuality, Innate Character

Yea, as the sun (what day thy life was leant
The world) did stand each planet's sphere to greet —
So throv'st thou erst, obedient to thy bent,
By that same law which hither sped thy feet.
Such must thou be. None yet his Self outwent,
This rede sybil and seer of old repeat;
For never time nor might could break asunder
The shape seed-hidden, whose life unfolds its wonder.

TVXH: DAS ZUFÄLLIGE

Luck, Environment

Yet Somewhat doth with gracious tread outgo
The straitest bound, and with and round us move.
Not lonely long; with fellows dost thou grow,
As oth'r well do, doth thee to do behoove.
Now for and now against thee falls the throw!
Thy life a game whose chances thou must prove.
The years, unnoted, have their ring united,
And now, the lamp doth lack the flame to light it.

ΕΡΩΣ : LIEBE

Passion, Love

Not long it tarrieth. From heaven He flings
Where to He soared out of the primal Void.
Lo, hither he hovereth on airy wings
In springtide about brow and breast light-buoyed,
Feigning to flee, with subtle home-flutterings.
Then weal is woe—panic with sweetness cloyed.
Some hearts waste in the many their emotions;
The noblest to one only vow' th devotion.

ΑΝΑΓΚΗ : NÖTHIGUNG

Necessity, Fate

Then once more 'tis—even as the stars deem just:
Condition and law and the will of all—be will . . .
For that alone in sooth we ought and must!
Each willful wish before that Will hushed still.
What most we prize from the heart's core we thrust.
Mood, will and whim the hard "thou shalt" fulfill.
So fare we yet, in seeming freedom, yearly
More close beset than erst and hemmed more nearly.

ΕΛΠΙΣ : HOFFNUNG

Hope, Aspiration

But from such metes and bounds, such walls of brass
The stubborn gates unbolt them and unbar,
Tho' ancient as the hills their rocklike mass.
A Spirit light-flitteth, untrammelled; lo, we are
From cloudrack, reek and rain upcaught, and pass
Breathless with her, given wings of her, afar.
Ye know her well. No realm her revel may banish.
One wing beat—and the worlds behind us vanish!

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE.

Alameda, California.